

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

MINUTES

June 21, 2016

Members Present: Noreen Batchelder, Linda Hanson, Robert Kennedy, Ellen Phillips, Donna Sterling, and Philip Walker
Council Liaison: Shari Cantor
Members Absent: Ray Guenter, Ruth Kurien, Connie Melo
Staff Present: Kathleen Faroni
Guests: Senator Beth Bye, Kevin Farmer, Sheila Diamond

Chairman Philip Walker called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM.

The Minutes of the May 17, 2016 were approved unanimously with the note that Police Chief Gove presented information on scams on seniors. Booklets are available.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Philip Walker welcomed Senator Beth Bye. He spoke about the Senior Fair at the West Hartford Senior Center which presented a good opportunity for Commission members to speak with seniors and vendors that address needs in the community.

Senator Beth Bye

Senator Bye thanked the Commission members for their service. She was present at the Fair and spoke to providers about issues including overtime in home care. Senator Bye has chaired the Appropriations Committee for 3 years. She spoke in detail about the challenges in the state budget: revenues not as anticipated; while unemployment is down, wages have stayed flat so income tax revenue not meeting projections. Cuts included: 1% in home care; 1% in temporary assistance to needy families. West Hartford did receive extra education dollars. She noted that the vast majority of seniors in the Northeast stay in place – the challenge is to attract and keep young people. It is important to keep corporate headquarters in CT. Corporate taxes used to bring in 7%; now it's 1.8%. Rebalancing continues with the hope that the unions will come to the table. With the campaign this year, it is important to talk about the good things in the state such as a well-trained workforce.

Chairman Walker stated his concern to Senator Bye that the "tax and spend" policies of past sessions of the General Assembly are causing anxiety for our seniors, both from the financial burdens they place upon their personal situations and the way in which they are discouraging their grandchildren from returning to Connecticut to work and raise families. Senator Bye replied that she appreciated the concern and pointed out that state taxes are not being raised this year. Some of the State's efforts to attract companies that will provide jobs and increase the tax bases, such as Jackson Labs, are bearing fruit.

Senator Bye shared information about Smart Growth America.

Smart growth is a better way to build and maintain our towns and cities. Smart growth means building urban, suburban and rural communities with housing and transportation choices near jobs, shops and schools. This approach supports local economies and protects the environment.

At the heart of the American dream is the simple hope that each of us can choose to live in a neighborhood that is beautiful, safe, affordable and easy to get around. Smart growth does just that. Smart growth creates healthy communities with strong local businesses. Smart growth creates neighborhoods with schools and shops nearby and low-cost ways to get around for all our citizens. Smart growth creates jobs that pay well and reinforces the foundations of our economy. Americans want to make their neighborhoods great, and smart growth strategies help make that dream a reality.

Smart Growth America is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth practices to more communities nationwide. Learn more about how smart growth helps make neighborhoods great by exploring our work on [Housing](#), [Business](#), [Jobs](#), [Economic Prosperity](#), [Transportation](#), the [Environment](#), the [Health of our Communities](#) and neighborhood [Revitalization](#).

She noted that the Commissions on Aging is now the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors.

Town Council

Mayor Shari Cantor spoke about the Council's transition. She will be holding regular office hours. The sale of the UConn property is being finalized. It has been a complicated process. The mil rate is now capped across the state – it is an intricate setup. She noted that brick and mortar retail is having a hard time. There will be an October 1 revaluation for the grand list. Mayor Cantor hopes to have a Council member attending future Commission meetings.

Human Services

No report

Transportation

Kevin Farmer reported that the Board has finalized its Strategic Plan. It includes: the development of a Governance Committee, volunteer recruitment, the identification and recruitment of a volunteer to coordinate volunteers. There was a Workshop for Drivers in May which covered how best to serve clients who have Alzheimer's and Dementia. The 12,000th ride will be celebrated in October.

Senior Job Bank

Sheila Diamond reported that requests from businesses are booming. Residential requests are up also. New volunteers have been added to staff. A strategic marketing plan is being developed. Sheila asked that these Minutes reflect the SJB's thanks to Shari Cantor for her efforts in bringing the SJB back.

Staff Reports

Written reports accompany these minutes. There will be a combined Volunteer Thank You luncheon on August 3rd at Town Hall.

Other Business

The agenda items of the review of the Commission description, inviting input from seniors at Commission meetings, and the agenda for future meetings were tabled.

The meeting adjourned at 11:58am.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for Tuesday, September June 20, 2016 at 10:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Lynn Silverman
Volunteer Secretary